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# ***LABOUR ORGANISER***

## **★ CONTENTS ★**

**Is Canvassing Worth While?**

**Alphabetical Order Victory**

**Counties Plan Election Gains**

**Local Government Bill**

**County Election Calendar**

**PRICE FIVEPENCE**

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• FAIR PRICES

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SITUATIONS VACANT PAGE 27

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# THE LABOUR ORGANISER

EDITOR: A. L. WILLIAMS

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PRICE FIVEPENCE

## Is Canvassing Worth While?

THE way is hard for those enthusiasts who advocate election campaigning based upon canvass returns. They are used to the argument that all successful electioneering entails is a vigorous policy and a noisy campaign. Now they have to face the charge that canvassing does not reveal the true voting intention of the canvassed, and, therefore, is a waste of time.

Writing in the *London News* last month, Mr. Harry Short said

Is canvassing for candidates worth while? After what I heard happened in the Ipswich By-election, I have my doubts.

In one street 58 voters were canvassed. The Liberal canvass returns were:

- 21 were out
- 16 would vote Liberal
- 5 Conservative
- 5 Labour
- 11 doubtful

The Tory canvass returns for the same houses were: 21 out (not necessarily the same 21);

- 10 Conservative
- 6 Labour
- 21 doubtful
- 0 Liberal

I feel certain if the figures had been given by the Labour canvassers, apart from the 'outs', all the 'fors' and 'againsts' would be entirely different once again.

The large number of cards marked 'out' often means the people won't answer the knock on the door, as they are often too engrossed in such highbrow pursuits as doing football

permutations, looking at the television, or listening to the wireless.

I have seen innumerable cases of a 'knocker-up' on the day of the election, calling on Labour 'promises' and finding Tory bills in the windows.

It looks very much as if Mr. Short has been misled by the newspaper reports. Rarely does an election agent publish election returns, even for a particular street, if he does, his purpose is purely propaganda, and propaganda is notoriously suspect.

### By-Election Experience

In contrast to the newspaper reports, upon which Mr. Short builds his argument, the experience of several recent by-elections shows that it is possible to make a very accurate estimate of the Labour vote when the total promises secured by the canvass is known. This proves that, with all its limitations, the canvass has been reasonably accurate.

What is the alternative to a canvass? It can only be an indiscriminate distribution of literature during the campaign and an indiscriminate knocking up on polling day. Though Mr. Short seems to realise this as is shown by the final sentences of his *London News* letter.

It seems the approach to the electors at the door must be different. Instead of saying 'I come on behalf of Mr. Smith, the Labour candidate, can we rely on your support?' it *should* be, 'I come on behalf of a candidate for the election. Can you

please tell me which one you intend voting for, so that we know who are our supporters?"

A truer reply would be had this way.

The defects of by-election canvassing do not so much arise from the untruthfulness of electors as from the inadequacy of the canvass. An experienced canvasser is able to judge with some certainty which way the elector will vote by the nature of the reply he receives on the doorstep, and certainly will not claim a 'promise' if he has any doubts.

### Correcting Inaccuracies

What some canvassers are inclined to do is to mark their registers for the whole household on the 'say so' of the person interviewed, and if this is done mistakes are bound to occur. Inaccuracies, for whatever reason, can be corrected if the records are not the result of only one canvass, made during the rush and flurry of an election, but have been accumulated over a considerable period. That is why the marked register and continuous canvassing are regarded as essential for electoral success in marginal constituencies.

Elections are taking place nearly all the time. As well as annual council elections, and sometimes triennial County Council elections, there are often ward by-elections in between, and all these see some canvassing done. Canvassing when the electors' lists are published and membership canvassing also produce valuable information.

If this information is properly recorded and is transferred each year to the new register it is possible to produce a fairly complete and accurate picture of the local political potential.

### Solid Labour

Where an elector has told a canvasser he will vote Labour in several elections running and where the Committee Room records show that he did vote, it is safe to assume that he is a solid Labour promise.

A Labour promise who has not

voted, or a person who has been marked 'for', 'against' and 'doubtful' in previous canvasses requires special attention before he can be properly classified.

If an agent faced a campaign in a constituency having an electorate of 60,000 with 30,000, or more, promises on a register marked in this way he would be safe in forecasting a victory. The victory would be assured if, after the promises were re-canvassed, there was no fall in the total. The full force of his campaign would then be directed to securing the maximum turn-out of known Labour supporters, instead of being dispersed over the whole constituency.

The only alternative to the steady, if slow, building up of a marked register is the adoption of hit or miss methods of electioneering. From an agent's personal point of view there is much to be said for his doing this. He will satisfy those, and there are many in the Labour Party, who prefer to send literature to everybody, to hold the maximum number of meetings, to do the minimum of canvassing, and on polling day to run about in loud-speaker cars making a lot of noise.

But if he keeps his head and understands the real contribution of an agent to electoral success, he will persist in the job of finding where Labour supporters are and of persuading them to vote for his candidate.

## D. L. Ede

WE regret to report the death of Douglas Ede, agent at Bury St Edmunds. Mr. Ede, who was 49 years of age, had been agent in this vast rural constituency since 1949, where at the last election the Tory majority was only 4,570.

Strong support for Labour has been built up in the villages, and the party boasts an individual membership of over 2,000.

Recently Mr. Ede suffered bad health and the party had decided to appoint an additional organiser to relieve him of the strain of travelling about the constituency



# ALPHABETICAL ORDER VICTORY

*by John Cartwright*

**M**Y first taste of elections in the parish of Oxted came in May of last year and I cannot truthfully say that I enjoyed the experience. Oxted is a sprawling community, boasting six churches, a railway station, several streets of shops, the rural council offices, a large factory and some 4,600 electors registered alphabetically — at least they were registered alphabetically, and that's what the story is all about.

Having nominated our candidates for the four vacant seats on the rural council, we began the straightforward mechanics of the campaign. But being new to the constituency, I hadn't bargained for the electoral register. Not only were the electors' names entered alphabetically, but in most cases the address consisted of nothing more than a house name.

## **Rose Cottage**

I am quite prepared to believe that in a small village it is simplicity itself to trace Mr. Brown of Rose Cottage, but try it when you are dealing with four and a half thousand people! And just to add to our cup of sorrow, we found that there were at least five different Rose Cottages in the parish!

Fortunately for my sanity, we obtained a street directory published by an enterprising local printer and the bulk of our canvassing and addressing was based on this rather than on the electoral register. When it came to delivery, however, we were forced to rely on the knowledge of the village elders to sort out which Rose Cottage was which.

Even then we had neither the time nor the workers to trace some of the more exotic house names in the farther flung regions of the parish. A goodly pile of election addresses which defied our Sherlock Holmes efforts were therefore dumped into

the ample lap of Her Majesty's Post Office—it was well worth the money to see the back of them—and for all I know, there may still be a postman wearily searching for Mr. Brown of Rose Cottage.

Once the election was safely out of the way, we politely explored the possibilities of obtaining a street ordered register. The Electoral Registration Officer promptly referred the matter to the clerk of the rural council who was unenthusiastic about the suggestion. There ensued a short, sharp correspondence in which we sought to counter the objections put forward. But the rejection was complete. It was not, we were told, a practical proposition.

Haunted by the memory of Rose Cottage, we were not prepared to let the matter rest there. After obtaining advice from Len Sims, Technical Assistant to the National Agent, we decided to take the bull by the horns and submit a formal application to the county council. This we based on the impossibility of contesting an election with the information provided in the electoral register.

Several examples of confusing and misleading registration were cited and a copy of the street directory was also submitted on the basis that anything a private firm could do ought not to be beyond the powers of the local authority. For good measure, we quoted instances of parishes in other parts of the county which were far less urban in character than Oxted but which nevertheless had the advantage of a street ordered register.

## **Tory Support**

In the hope of adding weight to our representations, we also sought the support of the local Tories, who enjoy an overwhelming majority on the rural council. Whilst this was forthcoming,

their agent pointed out that they had been attempting to obtain such a change for several years and, although he was far too polite to say so, he clearly did not hold out much hope of our being successful where greater minds had failed.

When the application came before the general purposes committee of the county council, we were fortunate in that our prospective parliamentary candidate was also a member of the committee. This gave us a very useful voice in their deliberations and the next thing we heard was a brief note from the Electoral Registration Officer to the effect that street ordering would be employed in the compilation of the 1958 register.

So the spectre of Rose Cottage has been exorcised! But even more important is the large size boot now wedged firmly in the door which leads to more street ordered registers in our rural district.

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## Persistence wins against the 'tele'

A BITTERLY cold night; rows of prefabs with a light in every window; five of us huddled together on the corner ready to start on a membership campaign, following an important and very successful by-election.

Every house had been canvassed and we had a marked register which was 90 per cent red. What more could we want? Here was fruitful ground for our endeavours. Pity it was so cold though!

However, we started off manfully—or should I say womanfully?—hoping to warm up as the evening proceeded and as we gathered in our new members.

Rat-tat-tat—No answer; try the back door—nothing doing; front again—still no response. 'Oh, Well!' On to the next house—same result.

At the third house we decide to win or bust, so we just keep on knocking. Eventually the door opens and we rehearse our opening gambit: 'Good

evening, Madam; we're sorry if we've interrupted . . . 'Oh! that's all right, but we always watch the telly in the evening.'

One hand on the door ready to close it, one eye and one ear on the telly, one eye and one ear on us, wondering what on earth we want and why we don't hurry up and say it and get on.

### Not Encouraging

Not a very encouraging atmosphere. However, we do our best to wean the lady's attention long enough to explain our purpose. 'Oh, yes, we always vote Labour but I don't know about joining. You'll have to see my husband about that and he's on shift work. Yes, any time in the morning . . . That's right you come and see him.'

Not very much to warm our hearts yet, but we press on. After half-an-hour or so of dogged work we report three invitations to 'call back', and many unopened doors—but no new members. 'Faint yet pursuing' we continue hopefully and find a little encouragement.

We are told that our new M.P. is 'ever so nice; we've seen him on the telly', and we begin to discover that the telly, with all its unsocial and unfriendly habits may prove to be one of the best means of bringing our propaganda into the home.

We still have to get on to the doorstep for our members, however, and our biggest difficulty is how to get the 'telev viewers' on to their own doorsteps to hear our case. This will be the subject of a full-length debate at our next ward meeting when we shall report the net result of our efforts: six new members and four invitations to call back!

Meantime we are concentrating our efforts on the 'owner-occupiers'. During the by-election campaign we found a good deal of misunderstanding and some deliberate misrepresentation of our new Housing Policy. So tonight we sally forth into somewhat different territory in an effort to correct these misunderstandings. We shall supplement our verbal efforts with the Party's excellent leaflet on the subject and hope to meet with some success.

There's a gale blowing and—once again—it's bitterly cold, but having examined the *Radio Times* we are starting early in order to do our work before the popular telly programme begins. What a life!

HARRIET GRAY



# Receipts are Needed for Elections

A SECTION of three lines in the Cheques Act of 1957, which came into force last October, is causing considerable argument and confusion. The Section reads as follows:

*An unendorsed cheque which appears to have been paid by the banker on whom it is drawn is evidence of the receipt by the payee of the sum payable by the cheque.*

Many firms and individuals have taken advantage of this provision by ceasing to issue receipts for all accounts paid by cheque. This, of course, affords them a considerable saving—2d. stamp duty on all amounts of 40s. and over, plus 2d. postage.

While we as a Party may not be greatly affected—other than that it is always desirable for auditors to see receipted bills—the question of electoral law has to be considered. Section 61 (2) of the Representation of the People Act, 1949, lays down:

*Every payment made by an Election Agent in respect of any election expenses shall, except where less than 40s., be vouched for by a bill stating the particulars and by a receipt.*

The question arose, therefore, as to what would be the position of an Election Agent who paid his account by cheque and received no receipt. Clearly, to comply with electoral law a stamped receipt is required, yet the Cheques Act permits an unendorsed cheque paid by the banker to whom it was drawn as evidence of the receipt.

## STAMP ACT

A solution has been found by studying the Stamp Act of 1891. Section 101 provides for stamped receipts on all amounts of £2 and over. As no Section of the Stamp Act has been repealed by the Cheques Act, this requirement must still stand. This being so, it still will be necessary for Election Agents to ask for, and receive, stamped receipts for election payments. To avoid any difficulty it is

desirable to ask for a receipted account when making payment.

Any doubt as to the correctness of this view was removed when the question of the right of a person to demand a receipt was raised in the House of Commons. The following extract from Hansard covers the point admirably:

MR. IREMONGER asked the Secretary to the Treasury if he will take steps to inform the public that the Stamp Act, 1891, remains in force notwithstanding the coming into force of the Cheques Act, 1957; and that a person who pays a sum of £2 or over by cheque or otherwise retains his right under the Stamp Act to a duly stamped receipt, and that a payee who refuses a request for such a receipt is liable to a fine of £10 under Section 103 of that Act.

MR. POWELL: The position is as stated by the hon. Member.

Election Agents must, therefore, ask for receipted accounts. If any Election Agent does make a request and is refused, it will be well worth his while mentioning the penalty that can be incurred.

## Situations Vacant

CHICHESTER C.L.P. requires full-time Secretary/Agent. Well-equipped office, staff of two, car and allowances. The appointment to be made in consultation with the National Executive Committee. Salary above National minimum for suitable applicant. Application forms can be obtained from The Chairman, 11 St. John's Street, Chichester, Sussex, to whom they should be returned not later than 1st March, 1958.

BURY ST. EDMUNDS C.L.P. invites applications for the post of full-time Organiser. The appointment to be made in consultation with the National Executive Committee. Salary in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms can be obtained from the National Agent, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1, to whom they should be returned not later than 8th March, 1958.

NORTH DORSET C.L.P. invites applications for the post of full-time Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. The appointment to be made in consultation with the National Executive Committee. Application forms can be obtained from the Secretary, Miss S. Fooks, Spring Cottage, East End, Wimborne, Dorset, to whom they should be returned not later than 3rd March, 1958.

# DO WE DESERVE COLLECTORS?

NO matter where you go—north, south, east, west, in England, Scotland or Wales, there is the same old cry, “members are easy to make, but what we want are collectors”.

Do we deserve collectors? Some constituencies certainly do, and where that is the position the collecting problem is at a minimum. Other constituencies do not. In these instances the collecting of membership subscriptions becomes a very real headache.

The fact is that there is no worse job in the Labour Party than that of the collector. He trudges through all kinds of weather to all kinds of people. Only too often he knocks at a locked door, and that means another journey. Then there are times when ‘Ma’, fed-up with paying for herself and ‘Pa’, or perhaps just for ‘Pa’, says, “Oh, I am always paying out—call when the old man’s at home.”

There is the member who likes to tell the collector exactly what he thinks about the shortcomings of the local councillors, who cannot do right for doing wrong. He has to listen patiently while another member points out how the history of the world, let alone the Labour Party, might have been changed if only the Labour Parliamentary Party had acted differently.

## *Has to Suffer*

What he has to suffer because of the sins of omission and commission of ‘Transport House’ is nobody’s business. Then comes the day when somebody’s youngster was not invited to the Christmas Party or the summer outing, and he must use the diplomacy and skill of a statesman to persuade that particular member to continue his membership. Of course, he does meet some cheerful comrades on his rounds, which compensate him for the trials and tribulations he endures in the name of the ‘Party’.

Collectors must be made to feel that they are not just there to collect money. The fact is that they are vital to the efficiency of the Party. Without their efforts membership could neither be maintained nor increased, and the coffers of the Party would be sadly depleted. It is necessary, therefore, that they should be closely linked with the local officers. Some may be delegates to their respective General Committees, but many will not have wide contacts.

## *An Excellent Idea*

It is an excellent idea to have a bi-monthly or quarterly, meeting of officers, together with collectors. Such meetings would have no authority to take decisions, but they can act in an advisory capacity, and will have a heartening effect on the collectors. Many matters concerning membership and collecting can be discussed, and an interchange of ideas is of considerable value. A well-planned membership campaign must take into account collecting potentialities, and who can give better advice on this aspect of the campaign than the collectors? Such a meeting can take a look at the present membership in the hope of recruiting additional collectors from its ranks. Again the collectors are the people who are most likely to give sound advice on the right people to be approached.

Lapsed membership is a problem in every party, and if more follow-up work were done a fair percentage would be recruited back into membership. Often enough a member resigns over some misunderstanding, or a petty problem. It is not the collector’s job to put these matters right, but that of the officers. He can, however, raise issues of this kind at a meeting, and arrangements can then be made for special visits to lapsed members. Other matters, such as transfer of information on removals and postal voters, are useful subjects for discussion.



Some thought should also be given to the psychological aspect of a collector's job. It is never good tactics to be constantly 'taking' from members and never giving anything in return. It is a bad thing for a collector to be known as "here comes the man for the money". Collectors should be given some pleasant jobs to do, such as the delivery of messages of appreciation from the party, a Christmas greeting from the Member of Parliament, or the candidate, invitations to such functions as children's parties.

If a Local party or a Ward makes a practice of sending some small gift to sick members, let the collector take the gift. Any letter sent to members expressing sympathy, or congratulation, should indicate that the collector has passed on the sad, or the good, news to the party.

### **Collector a Link**

The collector is a link between the member and the machine, and even if the member never attends a meeting he likes to feel he counts for something more than his monthly subscription.

Then surely once a year a Constituency or Local Labour Party can 'go to town' and invite its collectors to a special social function where, as well as being entertained, they can be heartily thanked for a job well done. It is not the social aspect which matters primarily—it is the gesture of appreciation. A special "thank you" in a happy atmosphere has not only been earned, but also pays handsome dividends.

There is another way in which the task of collecting can be eased considerably. When a member is enrolled he should be asked to indicate how often he would like his subscriptions to be collected. Many members would be willing to pay on a quarterly, or even half-yearly, basis if they were told how much it would assist our collectors and the party generally.

The point is that the arrangements should be made when the member is

initially enrolled. It is a very good idea when membership campaigning to send a letter from the local party officers, as well as a membership form, to the persons who are to be canvassed. That letter should include a paragraph relating to the collection of subscriptions, pointing out that if members prefer the collector to call at the beginning of each quarter, or, half year, rather than monthly, such an arrangement would be a great help.

Finally, there is the envelope or collecting box system which can be of help, particularly in scattered rural constituencies. A monthly visit in such areas may be a problem, though membership figures for county constituencies suggest that our folk in those localities are much hardier than are town and city dwellers. Some months ago, an article appeared in the *Labour Organiser* on the Conway envelope system. Twice a year members are supplied with a folding manilla card on which small envelopes are fixed covering a six months' period. The member puts his subscription in the monthly envelope and when the collector calls he gives stamps to the value of the money found in the envelopes and marks up the membership card.

An alternative is to supply members with a small cardboard box bearing the name of the Constituency Labour Party, in which members can place their monthly subscriptions.

We are in no doubt about the problem of collecting subscriptions, but it can be eased considerably by a little forethought, and by placing a true value on the men and women who undertake this onerous duty.

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# TWO COUNTIES PLAN

ON taking up a new appointment one expects to inherit all the usual problems, plus a few unusual ones, and the Huntingdonshire and Isle of Ely constituencies are no exception.

In addition to the normal problems of organisation I, or rather the candidate, appear to have inherited a ghost! Derek Page, the Isle candidate, now lives in the northern end of the county in an old fifteenth-century house reputedly haunted. So far we have tried the Stym system; the Reading system; Single card system, and many others, but have not succeeded in 'knocking-up'.

Being more serious, the joint area covers some half a million acres; has nearly 110,000 electors; 21 main local authorities—and 81 parish councils; represents everything from town to scattered hamlet, and presents many fascinating and varied problems. Added to these difficulties we have that of overcoming fear of the employer and the village 'big-wig', which is still very prevalent in this part of the country.

## ***Cromwellian Relics***

Both the constituencies have much in common—from Cromwellian relics to types of employment. Much of the working population is employed in agriculture, many on railways, some in brickyards, engineering, and a host of other jobs. Some travel out to nearby Peterborough to work, some to Cambridge. A few, no doubt, travel to World's End! (This being a district in Wisbech.)

There having been no preceding full-time agent, 'how to start?' was the main question when I moved here in October. Much good work had been done in the past by voluntary helpers, but co-ordination of activity was sadly lacking owing to the practical difficulty of travel.

Records of past activity, and of electoral arrangements, were few and far between. Party records were to be found in all sorts of places and electoral information had to be extracted from the official sources, these not being too helpful.

## ***Delve Deeper***

We have not yet succeeded in reducing everything to order, for even now it is possible to discover that at one time, a few years back, a party existed in this or that place, or that a canvass for members took place, but was not followed up. My list of members of the local authorities, who are Labour-minded people, is constantly being increased as I delve deeper and deeper into the area.

The immediate problems to be faced were, I decided, as follows:

- (a) The establishment of electoral and party records.
- (b) The meeting, overhaul, and improvement of existing party organisations.
- (c) The enlargement of existing organisations and starting of new local units.
- (d) The planning and commencement of campaigns with the Prospective Parliamentary candidates. (Both constituencies having only a short time before selected new candidates.)
- (e) The making of preparations for the 1958 local government elections. (Excluding parish councils there being 89 county council seats; 56 borough council seats; 96 urban district council seats; and 185 rural district council seats.)

Three months have now passed and a review of the situation shows that we have been able to make some progress. The electoral registers for each constituency have been unearthed and an analysis of the electors in each constituency prepared showing the registration unit, number of electors, 'Y'



# THEIR ELECTION GAINS

voters, service voters, etc.

From this a list of the electorate for each local government area has been prepared and an analysis of the number of councillors, etc., for each authority prepared. To complete this part of the work we are now engaged on a survey of the polling station arrangements to see what improvements are required.

Party records were easier to compile, there being only eight local parties in the Isle and seven in Huntingdonshire. Other information regarding projected or lapsed parties turns up from time to time and is still being added.

Head Office returns show that at the end of 1956 there were 881 individual members in the Isle and 772 in Hunts. By the beginning of September, I estimate that the paying membership was around 575 in the Isle and slightly lower in Hunts. In September, a NALSO team visited both areas and increased membership by 212 and 215 respectively.

Our main drive at present, therefore, is to get the local parties to consolidate their present membership, overhaul their collecting machinery and appoint a membership secretary, and to establish a regular monthly, or even fortnightly, drive for new members.

During the next month we shall be holding these drives in Wisbech (3 days); March (2 days); Huntingdon (5 days); Ely (3 days); Whittlesey and Chatteris (1 day each). This type of programme, with the appropriate area being leafleted in advance, will be repeated in the months that lie ahead and will be extended to our other local parties.

## **Gradual Increase**

In this way a gradual increase in membership will come about and will give each party time to consolidate its increase and arrange its collections

before undertaking a further drive. The principle of a continual campaign on membership has been accepted.

New parties are projected after we have been able to restart those which were in existence, but have lapsed. Two such parties have been restarted since last October and are doing well.

Having two such candidates, my first thought was that programmes could be duplicated, but this has not been practicable as one lives in his constituency and the other is living in Cheshire. For both of them the principle plan is to get them on the doorstep and introduced to the electors. Whenever they are free, they join our canvass teams and work with the voluntary members.

## **Candidates' Visits**

Derek Page, our Isle candidate, is in the constituency each Friday and Saturday, plus an occasional appearance on other days. This means that he is in Wisbech, our largest centre, one week-end each month; the same in March; and one week-end each month in one of the smaller urban areas, and the remaining week-end in one of the villages. In Huntingdonshire we are making arrangements for the candidate to put in longer periods of work, but he cannot come so often.

Meetings are being held in various villages, either arranged by local parties or in co-operation with the local branch of the Agricultural Workers' Union. While it is true that the days of large meetings have passed, we feel that in the villages it is still worth while.

We are drawing from 25 to 30 at these meetings and the resultant Press publicity, and talk in the village following our meeting, is paying good dividends. Where possible the meeting is leafleted and the candidate and some workers do some canvassing prior to

the meeting and try to encourage electors to attend.

Constant use has been made of the local Press by having them at meetings or submitting reports to them afterwards. The Press has been very reasonably disposed towards us, but the essential thing is to keep them supplied with news.

Further plans are now being made for a poster campaign and extended use of the local papers. The purpose of our campaign in this respect of parliamentary candidates is twofold. To make the name of each candidate a household word and to spread the news of Labour's new policies to this vast and scattered electorate.

There being some 426 local government seats in the two counties, excluding parish council seats, most of which come up for election this spring, it is obvious that we had to make a decision as to those we were to concentrate on. With a county council covering each Parliamentary constituency it has been decided to make an all-out effort on these elections as the best way to shake the electorate into an awareness of Labour.

### **Trial Run**

It will also give us something of a trial run for the coming General Election, in that we shall be contesting over a very wide area and have all our local machinery at work at the same time.

The biggest problem to be faced is that of candidates. Progress is being made and we hope to have a very good number of candidates in each county on nomination day. How many we cannot yet say, and, indeed, it is not desirable to make the figure public.

In 1955, out of 89 seats in the joint area, only seven were contested. In many of them nobody was nominated and the retiring member was re-elected by default. We are hoping that on this occasion we shall fill some of these seats with an unopposed Labour candidate.

An election committee has been established in each county charged with the duty of obtaining candidates, preparing the election policy statement, and making arrangements for the actual campaign. Two day schools on Election Organisation are being arranged, to be held shortly before nomination day. This will give

candidates, agents, and key workers an opportunity to discuss all matters relating to the elections.

The atmosphere in both constituencies is good. People are beginning to say that Labour now stands a really good chance of winning the next General Election and recognising that Labour is a powerful force, which is here to stay in Huntingdonshire and the Isle of Ely.

**RICHARD A. BATES**

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## **FILL CASUAL VACANCY**

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**T**O be or not to be—that was the question. The issue in this case being whether or not a casual vacancy should be filled within six months of the councillor's normal retirement.

Section 67 (3) of the Local Government Act, 1933 (as amended by the Sixth Schedule of R.P.A., 1948) states that where a casual vacancy occurs within six months before 9th May (9th April in the case of county councillors) in the year in which the councillor whose office is vacant would normally have retired, an election under this Section would not be held to fill the vacancy, but the vacancy shall be filled at the next ordinary election.

Enquiry elicited the following information:

- (a) That the resignation was received by the Clerk on 21st October.
- (b) Notice of the vacancy was given by two electors on 26th November; and
- (c) Polling took place on 20th December.

In this case it was a town councillor who resigned, so the six months' period operated from 10th November. The argument arose over the question as to whether the vacancy, being declared after 10th November, meant that no election should be held or, the councillor having resigned before the 10th, the casual vacancy had to be held irrespective of when the notice of the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 34)



# POSTAL VOTE WILL WIN SEATS

*Every vote counts. An election today may be decided by the votes of absent voters . . . in fact, at the 1950 General Election there were 19 constituencies won by Conservatives where the majorities were less than the postal votes cast . . . The Conservative workers saw the tremendous possibilities created by the postal vote and took the initiative.*

—Conservative Central Office.

AS the Tories saw, seats can be won because of the postal vote, but there are probably at least as many supporters of Labour as there are opponents of Labour entitled to use the postal vote. Many of our parties in the past must have failed to realise this, since they have not given any real attention to the registration of Labour absent voters.

The exact number of electors entitled to the postal vote in any constituency at an election will depend on the age of the Register of Electors and the nature of the constituency, but it will be substantial everywhere and even decisive in some marginal seats. The extent of the potential postal vote is shown by the fact that well over 300,000 voted by post in the 1951 General Election.

## Past Elections

In past elections, in every constituency there must have been many hundreds who would have voted Labour if they could have got to the poll, but who were unable to vote because no organised effort has been made to obtain a postal vote for them. Many of these were qualified to be registered as absent voters long before the election and once on the Postal Voters List their names would have remained there indefinitely.

In any case, all applications for a postal vote have to be received 12 days before polling day in a Parliamentary election and by the last day for the delivery of nomination papers in a

local government election, so that most of the work has to be done before the election campaign gets going.

There are three main groups of electors who are entitled to claim the right to vote by post. They are those who have removed outside of the borough, urban district or rural parish in which they are registered; those whose jobs make it unlikely that they will be able to vote in person; and those who cannot go to the polling station because of permanent or temporary physical incapacity.

## Stay Indefinitely

Those whose employment, as well as those whose permanent physical incapacity, qualify them for a postal vote once they are registered will stay on the Postal Voters List indefinitely. This means that if their claims are accepted now they will be able to vote by post not only in the forthcoming local elections (except rural district and parish elections) but also in the Parliamentary election, whether it comes this year, next year or as late as 1960.

The work of dealing with these claims should be going on all the time and certainly should not be left until an election is imminent, when there will be many other matters crying out for immediate attention.

Those who qualify because they have removed since the Register was compiled remain qualified until the publication of a new Register, in which they will be entered for their new addresses. All the same, it is wise to collect information about removals throughout the year. It must be remembered that even with the newest Register the qualifying date was four months previously and not a few may have moved in that time, and, as the Register gets older, the number is certain to increase.

The task of tracing removals, especially to new addresses outside the

constituency, is a rather difficult one and is easier to handle if spread over a whole year than it is if tackled at the beginning of an election campaign. On the other hand, those who are suffering from a temporary physical incapacity qualify only with respect to a particular election and have to be dealt with in the early days of the campaign.

## Make Appointments

Each constituency and local Labour party, as well as each ward and polling district committee, should appoint a suitable person whose job it is to collect information about supporters who are likely to need a postal vote and to do all that can be done to have their names included on the Postal Voters List.

Those appointed by their parties as Postal Vote Officers can discover Labour supporters who are in these groups from various sources—personal contact; canvass records; local authorities' housing records; Trade Union secretaries and shop stewards; sympathisers who are members of the medical or nursing professions.

Their task becomes easier if active members are made to realise how important the postal vote is. Some parties have published 'Observer cards', which they have distributed among their members with the request that they should notify by the card to the appropriate Party officers any supporters they think are entitled to a postal vote.

Once the Postal Vote Officers have started their work information will begin to accumulate and it will be necessary to have worked out some simple method of dealing with applications and returning them. Proper records are essential because there is little point in getting supporters' names on the Postal Voters List if nothing is done about them when the election comes.

By-election returns show that the number of registered postal voters who

do not return their ballot papers is growing. Many working-class people, especially the elderly, are afraid of official forms and will not complete them without help and guidance. When an election comes, postal voters need special communications reminding them that they will vote by post and instructing them about the proper way of dealing with the ballot paper and the declaration. If on the despatch of the ballot papers Labour postal voters are canvassed as well, then there is little danger of their votes being wasted.

If Labour Party workers give proper attention to the postal vote between now and the next General Election, the advantages the Tories previously have enjoyed by their more thorough exploitation of its possibilities will disappear, and several additional seats can be added to the Labour majority.

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### (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32)

vacancy was given. It was argued that Section 67 of the Local Government Act made it quite clear that no casual vacancy could be held to fill a seat caused by resignation *until* notice was given by two electors—in this case not until 26th November.

A study of the Act, however, also showed that Section 65 lays down a number of provisions and the opening sentence is most important:

*For the purpose of filling a casual vacancy in any office for which an election is held under this Act, the date on which the vacancy shall be deemed to have occurred shall be . . . in the case of resignation, upon the receipt of the notice of resignation by the body or person to whom the notice is required to be delivered.*

Therefore the Clerk was quite right in accepting the notice of vacancy submitted by the two electors on 26th November, as the vacancy had occurred *before* the six months' proviso came into force. The fact that the filling of the vacancy did not come until over a fortnight *after* the deadline was immaterial.



# L.R.C. ON THE EVE OF BATTLE

by S. E. Barker

THE Sun Hall, Kensington, Liverpool, was the venue of the 1905 Conference of the Labour Representation Committee. Mr. Arthur Henderson presided. The Annual Report indicated that with the exception of the Miners' Union practically all the large trade unions had now affiliated.

Nevertheless, for the first time since the formation of the Committee, affiliated membership had declined a little, and now stood at 900,000 as against 969,000 in 1904. There were 158 trade unions and 73 trades councils affiliated, as compared with 165 and 76 in the previous year.

Two reasons for this slight decline were given. Several unions had amalgamated during the year and the effect of making the Parliamentary fund compulsory and retrospective had resulted in the disaffiliation of one or two small unions, and a decrease in the number of members on whom affiliation fees had been paid by some other unions.

## 46 Candidates

The list of approved Parliamentary candidates had grown to 46, and among the names of the newly selected candidates were Ben Turner (Dewsbury), Ben Tillet (Eccles), James O'Grady (East Leeds), and Joe Burgess (Camlachie). The Committee was not responsible for running any by-election candidates during 1905, but felt itself constitutionally justified in giving official support to two miners' candidates. John Robertson fought North East Lanarkshire, in a three-cornered fight, and increased Robert Smillie's vote of 1901 by over 1,000. Tom Richards, the secretary of the South Wales Miners' Federation, fought and won West Monmouth.

The Committee was not responsible for Scottish constituencies, but felt that circumstances justified giving sup-

port to John Robertson who was the miners' candidate. Shortly before the West Monmouth by-election the Miners' Federation, at its annual meeting, had decided that in future its candidates should run as 'Labour Candidates', and if elected to Parliament, should work in co-operation with the Labour Group in the House of Commons.

## Socialist International

A deputation consisting of the chairman and secretary represented the Committee at the International Socialist and Trade Union Congress, which met at Amsterdam. Conference was asked to approve the appointment of the deputation and the payment of an annual subscription of £5 to this organisation. Although conference finally approved the paragraph in the report, there was very stiff opposition from the floor on the grounds that as the Labour Representation Committee had never declared itself to be a Socialist body it was illogical it should be represented at a Socialist congress.

Special attention had been given during the year to the publication of leaflets. Six new ones had been added to the list, and several others were promised before the pending by-election. The total sales for the year had amounted to 589,650 and stocks were now over 1,000,000. Attention had been given to the importance of posters also, and eight had been published during the year, which the Committee felt had been very helpful in the by-elections.

The all important question of a Labour newspaper was before Conference once again. During the year the Committee had continued to co-operate with the Trades Union Congress and the circular sent out to the trades asking for support was signed jointly by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, the

Joint Federation of Trades and the Labour Representation Committee. Sad to say, the response to the circular was not encouraging and the Committee reported to Conference that the matter was still under consideration.

### Weekly Paper

A resolution on this subject was moved by John Hodge, of the Steelsmelters, calling for the election of a committee at conference which would be responsible for the publication of a weekly newspaper under the absolute control of the Committee, and that the expenditure incurred, and the capital required for such a paper be a pro rata charge on the affiliated organisation. Hodge finally accepted the recommendation of the Committee that the matter be left in its hands.

The Steelsmelters were again to the fore when Mr. T. Griffiths moved a motion calling upon all affiliated organisations to give support to Ruskin College. During the course of his speech, Griffiths pointed out that there were at least 22 colleges at Oxford providing the best education possible for the sons of the wealthy, but until a few years ago no college had existed for workmen. Testimony was given to the excellent training already given by Ruskin College to 300 students.

The Parliamentary Fund was again under review and had amounted to £4,491 13s. 2d. Conference supported the decision of Committee to commence payment of £200 per annum to all Members of Parliament elected under the auspices of the Committee whose candidatures had been promoted by organisations contributing to the fund.

The report indicated a remarkable growth of local Representation Committees. There was a strong feeling that these bodies must now be given national recognition. As a first step, conference was asked to agree that Labour Associations representing a whole constituency would be eligible for affiliation on the same terms as trade councils in constituencies which were not covered by such a body.

### Stiff Opposition

Stiff opposition to the recommendations came from a group of trade unionists led by Will Thorne, who feared that the proposition would lead to undue influence being exercised at annual conference by

non-trade unionists. Their opposition was overcome chiefly owing to the influence of Arthur Henderson.

A resolution was moved by Mr. J. Husbit, on behalf of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, approving adult suffrage and endorsing the Women's Enfranchisement Bill. This was seconded by Mrs. Cooper, of the Independent Labour Party, Mrs. Pankhurst and Philip Snowden.

An amendment was moved by H. Quelch, of the London Trades Council, which objected to the Women's Enfranchisement Bill on the grounds that it would increase the political power of the propertied classes by enfranchising the upper and middle-class women and leaving the vast majority of working-class women voteless.

The amendment went on to declare that adult suffrage for all men and women was the only franchise reform which merited the support of Labour Members of Parliament. Quelch was supported by prominent trade unionists and the amendment was carried by a very substantial majority.

The report also contained a very important paragraph on unemployment and the amendment to the King's Speech moved by Keir Hardie. A special two-day conference was held immediately following the annual conference on 'Unemployment' and the 'Provision of Meals for Schoolchildren at the Public Expense', over which Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., presided.

## CANDIDATES

THE following were endorsed as prospective Parliamentary candidates by the National Executive Committee recently :

St. Albans .. ..	Mr. L. W. Carroll
Heywood and	
Royton	Mr. H. Nevin
Blackpool North ..	Mr. W. H. Dugdale
South Nottingham	Mr. John E. Silkin
Ormskirk .. ..	Mr. G. E. Roberts



### WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDATURE

Thirsk and Malton Mr. J. Rex



# Local Council Revolution?

*Far reaching changes in the structure and functions of Local Government are possible as a result of the Bill now before Parliament. LEN SIMS begins an examination of the Bill's provisions.*

THE Local Government Bill has started its passage through the House of Commons. The scope of the Bill is considerable, extending into all aspects of local government. The number of proposed changes in the structure as well as in the financing and powers of local authorities are such as to ensure the debates in the House (and outside) will be long and lively.

While much of the immediate criticism will centre around the means whereby the Exchequer will make its grants to local authorities, and in respect of the powers to be granted them, the proposals for the review of local government organisation is perhaps an even more explosive subject.

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As a Party whose structure is based on parliamentary and local government boundaries it is natural that we should concern ourselves with that part of the Bill which covers these proposals. It is necessary to have some knowledge of what is envisaged.

The first proposal is to set up two Boundary Commissions. One commission will cover Wales (including Monmouthshire) and the other England (but excluding the metropolitan area). Each commission will consist of a chairman, deputy chairman and not more than five other members—only seven in all!

A Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Edwin Herbert, K.B.E., has been set up to study the metropolitan area. Its terms of reference are:

To examine the present system and working of local government in the Greater London area; to recommend whether any, and if so what, changes

in the local government structure and the distribution of local authority functions in the area, or in any part of it, would better secure effective and convenient local government; and to regard, for these purposes, local government as not including the administration of police, or of water, and the Greater London area as comprising the Metropolitan Police District together with the City of London, the Boroughs of Dartford, Romford, and Watford, the Urban Districts of Caterham and Warlingham, Chorley Wood, Hornchurch, Rickmansworth, and Walton and Weybridge, and the Parish of Watford Rural in the Watford Rural District.

The Greater London area (which already includes Middlesex and extends well into Kent, Surrey, Essex, and parts of Herts.) has, it will be seen, had added to it for the purpose of this review the boroughs of Dartford in Kent, Romford in Essex and Watford in Herts; the urban districts of Caterham & Warlingham and Walton & Weybridge in Surrey; Chorley Wood and Rickmansworth in Herts (together with the parish of Watford in that Rural District), and the urban district of Hornchurch in Essex—an extensive area which will cover a large percentage of our total population with very little countryside within its compass.

The Bill lays down that the first duty of the Commission for England will be to deal with the 'Special Review Areas'. These areas are the large conurbations in the North, the Merseyside and in the West Midlands.

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The Special Review Areas are grouped together as follows:

*Tyneside Area.* This area consists of the county boroughs of Gateshead, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, South Shields and

Tynemouth, the following county districts in the county of Durham: the borough of Jarrow and the urban districts of Blaydon, Felling, Hebburn, Ryton and Whickham, and the following county districts in the county of Northumberland; the boroughs of Wallsend and Whitley Bay and the urban districts of Gosforth, Longbenton and Newburn.

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*West Yorkshire Area.* This area consists of the county boroughs of Bradford, Dewsbury, Halifax, Huddersfield, Leeds and Wakefield, and the following county districts in the county of the West Riding of Yorkshire: the boroughs of Batley, Brighouse, Castleford, Keighley, Morley, Ossett, Pontefract, Pudsey and Spennborough and the urban districts of Aireborough, Baildon, Bingley, Colne Valley, Denby Dale, Denholme, Elland, Featherstone, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth, Horbury, Horsforth, Kirkburton, Knottingley, Meltham, Mirfield, Normanton, Queensbury and Shelf, Ripponden, Rothwell, Shipley, Sowerby Bridge and Stanley.

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*South East Lancashire Area.* This area will consist of the county boroughs of Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford and Stockport, the following county districts and parishes in the county of Chester: the boroughs of Altrincham, Dukinfield, Hyde, Sale and Stalybridge, the urban districts of Alderley Edge, Bowdon, Bredbury and Romiley, Cheadle and Gatley, Hale, Hazel Grove and Bramhall, Marple and Wilmslow, the rural district of Disley and the parishes of Carrington, Partington and Ringway in the rural district of Bucklow, and the following county districts in the county of Lancaster: the boroughs of Ashton-under-Lyne, Eccles, Farnworth, Heywood, Middleton, Moseley, Prestwich, Radcliffe, Stretford, and Swinton and Pendlebury and the urban districts of Audenshaw, Chadderton, Crompton, Denton, Droylsden, Failsworth, Horwich Irlam, Kearsley, Lees, Littleborough, Little Lever, Milnrow, Royton, Tottington, Urmston, Wardle, Westhoughton, Whitefield, Whitworth and Worsley.

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*Merseyside Area.* This area will cover the county boroughs of Birkenhead, Bootle, Liverpool and Wallasey, the following county districts in the county of Chester: the boroughs of Bebington and Ellesmere Port, and the urban dis-

tricts of Hoylake, Neston and Wirral, and the following county districts and parishes in the county of Lancaster: the borough of Crosby, the urban districts of Huyton-with-Roby and Litherland, and the parishes of Aintree and Simonswood in the rural district of West Lancashire and the parish of Kirkby in the rural district of Whiston.

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*West Midlands Area.* This area will consist of the county boroughs of Birmingham, Dudley, Smethwick, Walsall, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton, the following county districts in the county of Stafford: the boroughs of Bilston, Rowley Regis, Tipton and Wednesbury, and urban districts of Aldridge, Amblecote, Brierley Hill, Brownhills, Coseley, Darlaston, Sedgley, Tettenhall, Wednesfield and Willenhall, the following boroughs in the county of Warwick: Solihull and Sutton Coldfield, the parishes of Castle Bromwich and Kingshurst in the rural district of Meriden in that county, and the following boroughs in the county of Worcester: Halesowen, Oldbury and Stourbridge.

The Minister has power to make an order defining other areas as 'Special Review Areas' should he so desire.

In determining the order in which Special Areas are to be reviewed, the commission must comply with any directions of the Minister. In other areas the Minister may direct the commission to hold separate reviews in such areas as he may specify and, should there be no such directives, the commissions may hold reviews separately for such areas as they may determine. The Minister in this case has power to decide the order in which such reviews are to be held.

When holding a review of any area the commission must, in its investigation, consult with all local and public authorities, and other bodies of persons as appear to the commission to be concerned. Following such investigation and consultation, draft proposals will be prepared and copies supplied to the local authorities and the other bodies concerned. There will be a specific time within which representations may be made in respect of these draft proposals. (*To be continued*)



# COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS, 1958

(ENGLAND & WALES) DAY OF ELECTION	Thursday 10th April	Friday 11th April	Saturday 12th April	Monday 14th April	Tuesday 15th April	Wednesday 16th April
Notice of Election not later than .. .. .	13th March	14th March	15th March	17th March	18th March	19th March
Delivery of Nomination Papers and Consent not later than NOON ..	20th March	21st March	22nd March	24th March	25th March	26th March
Notices of decisions on Nomination Papers and Publications of Statement as to persons nominated by NOON	21st March	22nd March	24th March	25th March	26th March	27th March
Declaration, to Clerk of C.C. of Name and Address Election Agent not later than NOON	22nd March	24th March	25th March	26th March	27th March	28th March
Delivery of Notices of Withdrawals by NOON	22nd March	24th March	25th March	26th March	27th March	28th March
Application for Extension of Polling Hours not later than NOON	22nd March	24th March	25th March	26th March	27th March	28th March
Notice of Poll .. .. .	31st March	1st April	2nd April	3rd April	9th April	10th April
Notice of Appointment of Polling and Counting Agents not later than ..	2nd April	3rd April	9th April	10th April	11th April	12th April
Polling Day .. .. .	10th April	11th April	12th April	14th April	15th April	16th April
The Count .. .. .	As soon as may be practicable after close of poll					
Claims to be sent to Election Agent in respect of Election Expenses by .. .. .	24th April	25th April	26th April	28th April	29th April	30th April
Payment by Election Agent of claims in respect of Election Expenses by .. .. .	8th May	9th May	10th May	12th May	13th May	14th May
Return and Declaration of Election Agent as to Election Expenses by	15th May	16th May	17th May	19th May	20th May	21st May
Declaration by Candidate as to Election Expenses .. .. .	At the same time as that for the Election Agent or within seven days of the actual transmission of Return and Declaration.					

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